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ABSTRACT

Temperament type is a key to understanding the classroom behavior of social studies teachers. Current criticisms of strategies employed, dependence on the textbook, fact oriented testing, and the dearth of problem solving in lesson planning are grounded in professional decisions based on temperament preferences. Employing four types of temperament identified by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates in "Please Understand Me," this study analyzes the responses of 124 undergraduate and graduate education students. Those types favoring use of the lecture, dependence on a textbook, and fact-oriented testing were dominant at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The author concludes that little change in practice is likely until social studies educators become sensitive to the role of temperament type in their own decision making processes. Only then will they be able to plan effectively for the range of types represented in the student body of the secondary school. (Author)

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Temperament Types of Social Studies Teachers

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TEMPERAMENT TYPES OF SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS

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Mountains of documentation exist on the academic backgrounds, years of experience, course loads and professional activities of social studies teachers. But what do we know about the temperaments of these people who plan lessons, teach classes, and evaluate achievement in the social studies? Teacher temperament may be the key to what actually happens, or does not happen, in the classroom.

David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, in Please Understand Me (1984) offer a model for analysis of temperament types which is useful in explaining teacher behavior. Employing elements identified by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, they isolated four temperament types: SJ (Sensation-Judging), SP (Sensation-Perceiving), NT (Intuition-Thinking), and NF (Intuition-Feeling). Essential to understanding the four types is the predictability factor in human behavior which enables us to anticipate action. The authors clearly believe that, "temperament determines behavior because behavior is the instrument for getting us what we must (italics) have."

Teacher Types

The SJ teacher seeks to maintain the institution as it is. Dedicated to the work ethic, this type accepts the educational

hierarchy and expects students to comply with the rules. Preservation of the cultural heritage, a very important value, is reinforced by a product orientation which emphasizes tests, quizzes, and demonstrations as means of evaluation.

Freedom and spontaneity are the hallmarks of the SP teacher. Process oriented, student-teacher interaction is encouraged in the classroom. Thriving on performance, this type of teacher is not goal oriented but basically impulsive. Naturally, valuing 'freedom', this instructor reacts negatively to accountability when imposed by authorities.

The NT teacher is one who valuing intellectual growth, views mental development as a life-long challenge and takes every opportunity to interact with new ideas. Problem solving, which leads to the construction of mental models, is a major focus in classroom instruction. Placing a heavy emphasis upon subject matter acquisition, the NT teacher tends to be impersonal in relationships with students.

Finally, the NF teacher is a people oriented instructor who encourages student-student interaction which will result in self-actualization. Anticipating personal growth as a natural outcome of education, this type individualizes instruction as often as possible while avoiding lectures, which are perceived as encouraging emotional isolation.

Method

During the period 1978-1986, 73 undergraduate and 51 graduate students enrolled in social studies education courses in the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh, completed the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. The major educational goal of undergraduates was to gain Comprehensive Social Studies certification while most graduates sought to increase their knowledge and skills as practicing teachers.

Employing the Keirsey and Bates type categories, both undergraduate and graduate students were represented as follows:

Table 1

Type Categories by Number and Percent

Type	Number		Percent	
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Undergraduate	Graduate
SJ	24	26	33	51
SP	17	6	23	12
NT	14	5	19	10
NF	18	14	25	27

On the surface, it would seem that the four temperaments are rather well represented in this population and that most students in the secondary schools would have the advantage of experiencing

the teaching style of teachers whose temperament types are compatible with their own. However, a closer examination reveals that the NT's are underrepresented, particularly at the graduate level, while the SJ group has gained in percentage. A possible implication is that teachers who survived their initial training, and go on to graduate school, are those who are good managers, not necessarily those who strive for intellectual rigor in the classroom.

Classroom Realities and Temperament

Critics of social studies as currently taught loudly lament a series of problems ranging from the lack of subject matter knowledge to poor problem solving skills of secondary school students. Diane Ravitch (1985), documented the decline of historical knowledge both by personal observation of student responses in a New York City high school and by citing data accumulated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Curriculum and instructional priorities are characterized by John Goodlad as a "preponderance of classroom activity involving listening, reading textbooks, completing workbooks and worksheets, and taking quizzes — in contrast to a paucity of activities requiring problem solving, the achievement of group goals, students' planning and executing a project, and the like" (Goodlad, 1984).

What is the relationship between these critical views of life in the classroom and the teachers? Teacher temperament types are a key to understanding the critical picture portrayed. How do various temperament types react to the issues of passive teaching strategies, dependence on the textbook and fact oriented tests and quizzes?

Strategies and Resources

Heavy reliance upon lecture, a workbook and worksheets is a common criticism of classroom practice in the social studies. The SJ group, 50.9% of the graduate students, is the keystone in establishing wide use of these strategies and/or materials. Loyal and supportive of the institution or the school, these teachers practice a work ethic which emphasizes maintenance of the organization. Lectures and workbooks are efficient means to reach a large number of students during a very limited time period. A heavy emphasis consequently is placed upon packaging knowledge for mass consumption.

The SP's, who emphasize process, but not goal achievement follow the lead of the SJ's because they have a 'program' and a ready-to-implement structure. The NF group, which with the SJ's constitute the bulk of the teaching faculties, stresses the goal of self-actualization (Keirsey, 1978). Since every student should, theoretically, follow a unique path to that goal, the

result is a lack of focus. The organization provided by lecture, workbooks, etc., thus becomes the focus of 78% of the teaching faculty because it provides structure and activities consistent with the desire for order and mass instruction valued by the school administration.

The Textbook

Another vital issue is how teachers view and use the textbook. The SJ's value it as a summary of the cultural heritage which they so highly prize. Moreover, the chapter and unit organization is well suited to the emphasis upon sequence encouraged by this group. Support for this position comes from the small number of teachers (10%) in the NT category. Subject centered, they emphasize textbook knowledge as prerequisite to the intellectual growth represented in problem solving skills.

The combined force represented by the SJ and NT groups (61%) is a strong voice for conservatism in the schools. Supported by an historical memory which honors the textbook as the repository of our cultural heritage, the centrality of the text is assured.

Testing

Testing is also subject to severe criticism as being fact oriented to the virtual exclusion of concepts and generalizations. Once again, the influence of the SJ type is decisive. Employing a product orientation, they favor quizzes

and tests which demonstrate content acquisition. The subject matter reflects the classroom strategies favored by this group. The basic facts covered in lectures and worksheets are simply reinforced by tests stressing the same content. While this approach is consistent, it does not lead to in-depth examination of student knowledge. Since the other types lack the focus provided by the SJ's, the fact oriented examination orientation prevails throughout the field.

Problem Solving

Finally, Goodlad notes the "paucity of activities requiring problem solving, the achievement of group goals, students' planning and executing a project, and the like."

NT teachers (10%) enjoy problem solving as a key element in model building. Easily bored with repetition and highly structured materials, they perceive problem solving as the best strategy to encourage intellectual growth, but they may overlook the needs of individual students. Support for this position comes in a limited manner from the NF group (27%) who stress self-actualization. Great emphasis is placed upon decision making as the basis for growth. Being people oriented, however, they do not place the same value upon model building as do the NT's. However, the combined groups represent only 37% of the sample.

Conclusion

The major conclusion issuing from this study is that changes in practice are unlikely in the social studies classroom in the near future. The dominance of the SJ/NF types among today's teachers precludes significant change. Representing 78% of these currently teaching social studies, their emphasis upon maintenance of the status quo will assure the continued dominance of the lecture, textbook, and fact oriented testing. Only marginal resistance may be anticipated from the SP/NT types who represent merely 22% of the teaching population in this study. That does not bode well for reformers supporting curricula which emphasize concept development and problem solving as a base for intellectual growth.

A second conclusion is that the undergraduate students preparing to become teachers will not alter this pattern in any significant manner. The SJ/NF combination represents 58% of the undergraduate students. While that figure does represent a decline over the percentage of the same type currently in the classroom, dominance is still assured. If the SP types (23%) are viewed as supporters of the SJ/NF group, maintenance of the states quo is absolute.

Reforms which attempt to alter the lecture-recite-test sequence will not succeed by producing teacher proof curricula or

by exhorting teachers to utilize new materials furnished by publishing houses. The key factor in this situation is temperament; teachers will employ materials and strategies with which they feel comfortable.

The possibility for instituting significant change will occur when teachers, and future teachers, clearly understand their own temperaments and those of their students. As teacher self-perception sharpens, self-confidence and sensitivity to others will increase. At that point, awareness of behavior based on temperament, may effectively serve as a basis for employing teaching strategies which are appropriate to the temperament types represented in the student body.

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